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Bober

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(54) **FLUID ABSORBENT TAPE**
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(52) **U.S. Cl.** **134/6; 134/42; 604/385.01; 604/385.11; 602/41; 602/56**
(58) **Field of Classification Search** **134/15, 134/42, 6; 602/41; 604/385.11, 385.01**
See application file for complete search history.

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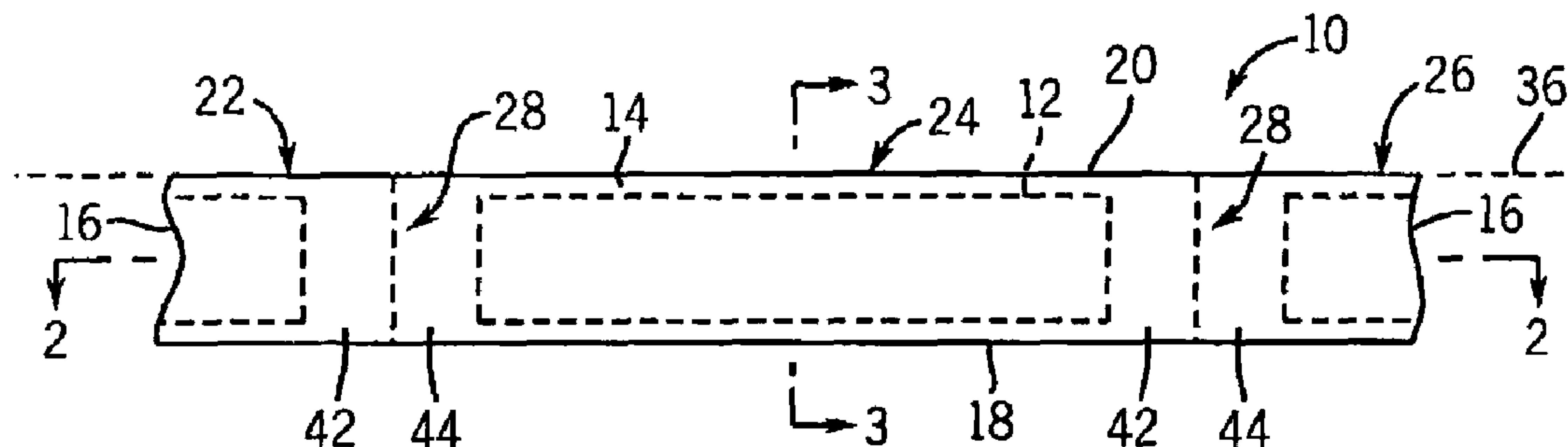
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A method for controlling the flow of a fluid on a surface. In some embodiments, the method includes providing a fluid absorbent tape that includes an absorbent material, a fluid permeable cover enclosing the absorbent material to form an elongated fluid absorbent tape, and a separating structure that is formed in a transverse direction across the elongated fluid absorbent tape and the absorbent material. The separating structure divides the elongated tape into first and second sections. The first section of fluid absorbent tape is separable from the second section of fluid absorbent tape along the separating structure. Also in some embodiments, the method further includes separating a desired length of the first section of fluid absorbent tape from the second section at said separating structure, placing the first section on the surface, and contacting the first section with the fluid to be controlled so that the absorbent material forms a physical barrier to the flow of fluid.

20 Claims, 2 Drawing Sheets



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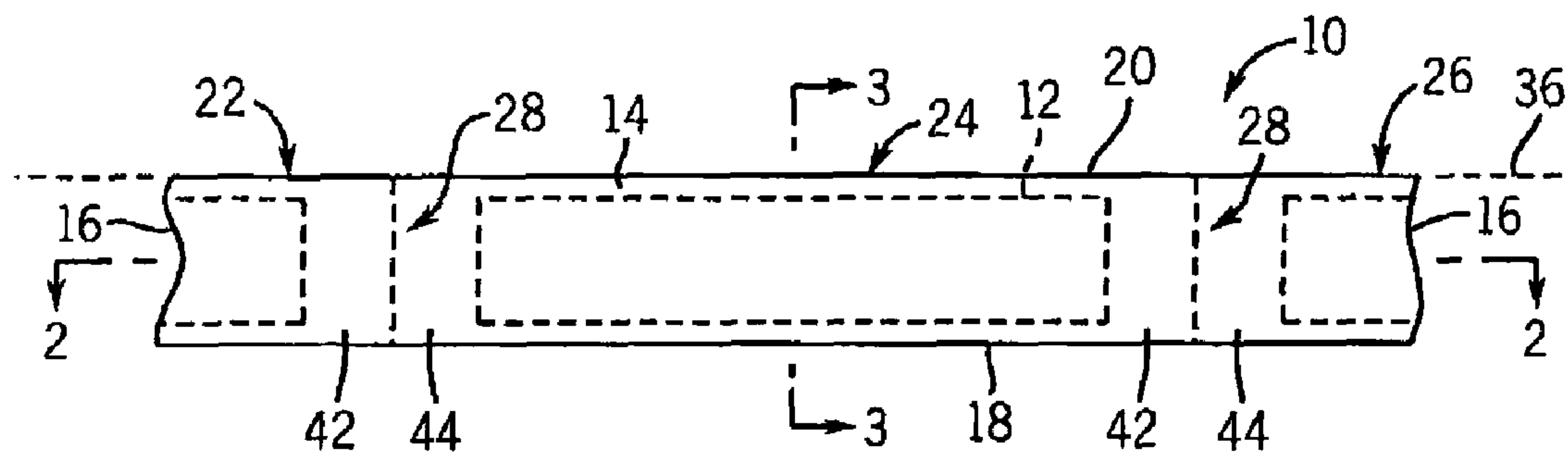


FIG. 1

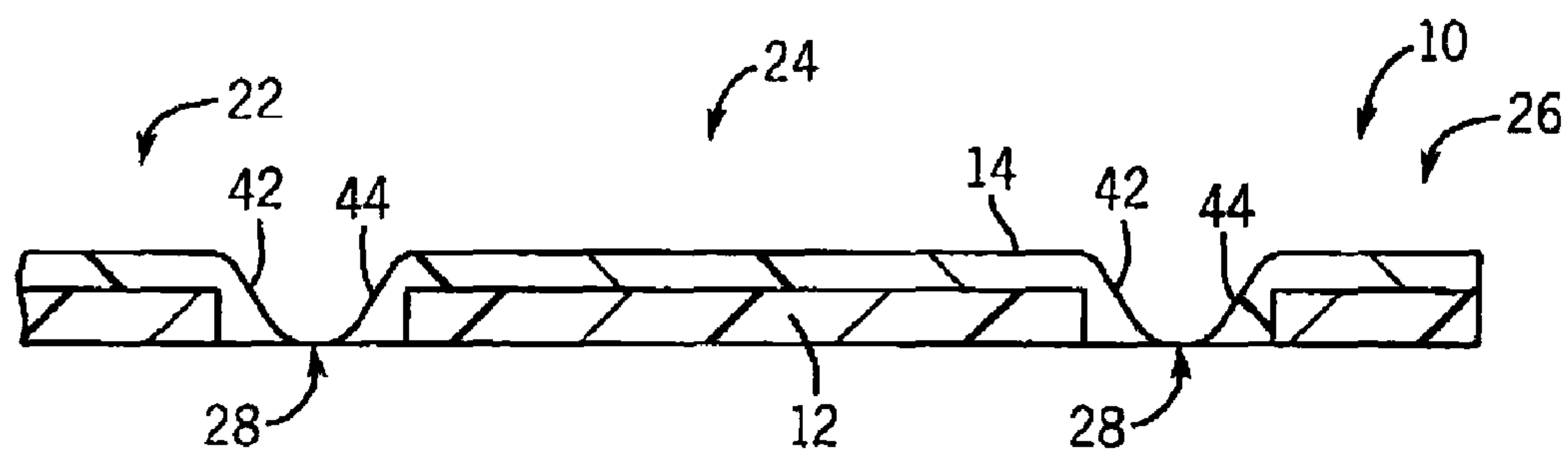


FIG. 2

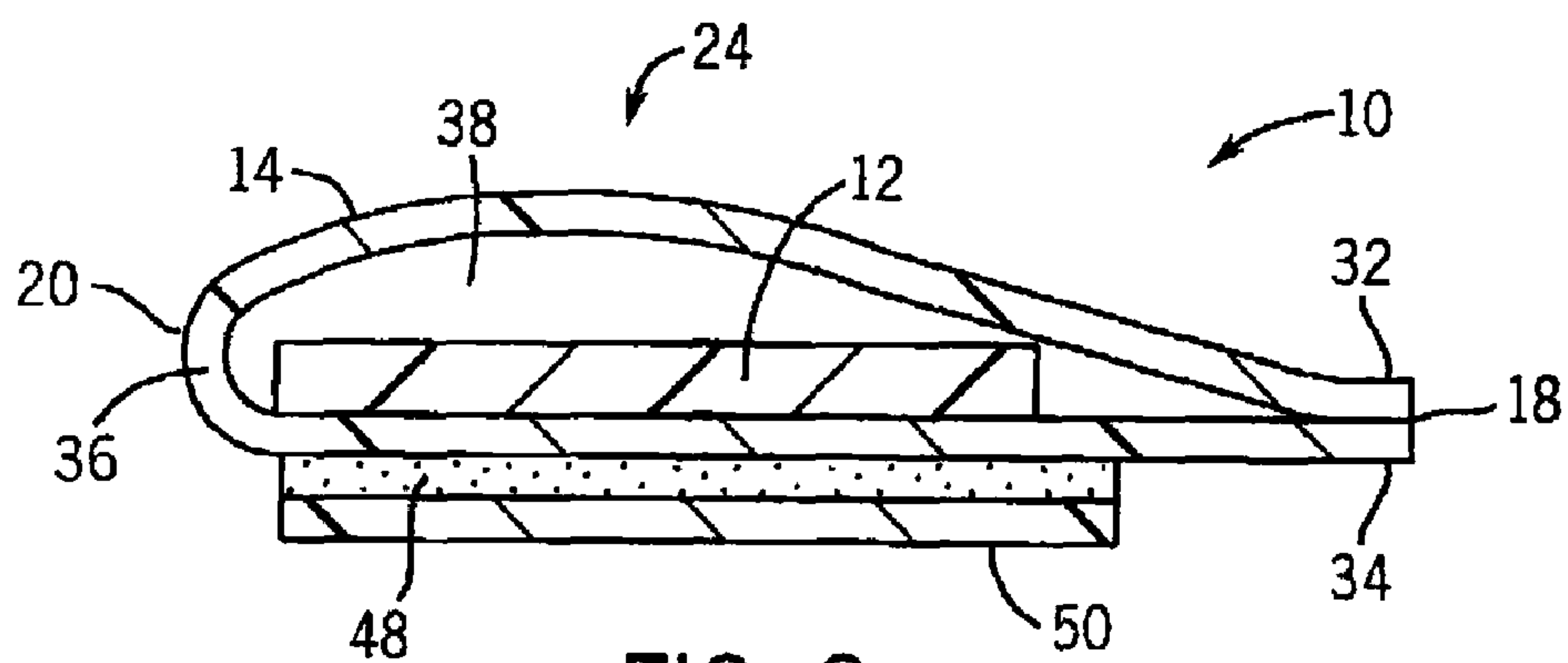


FIG. 3

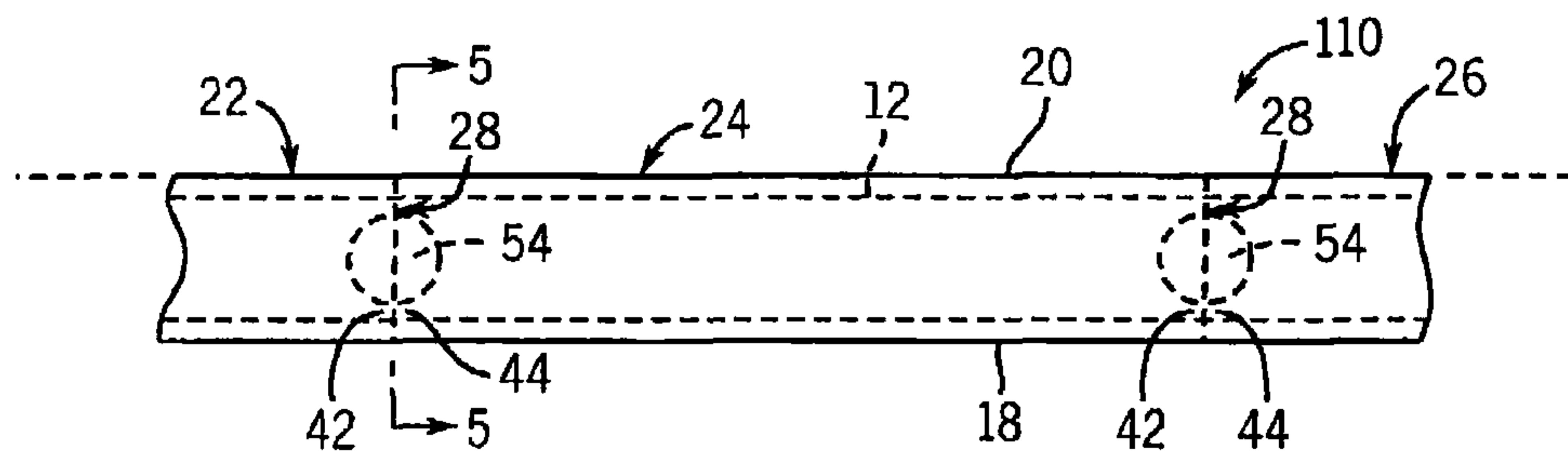


FIG. 4

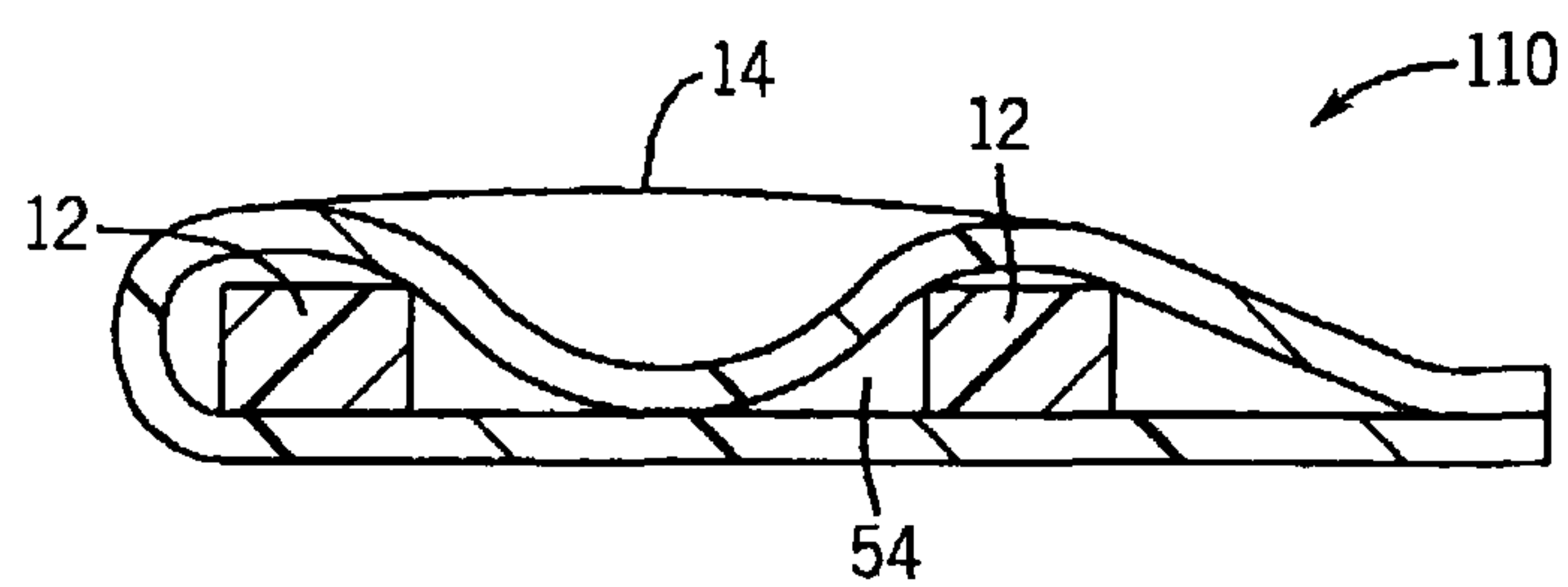


FIG. 5

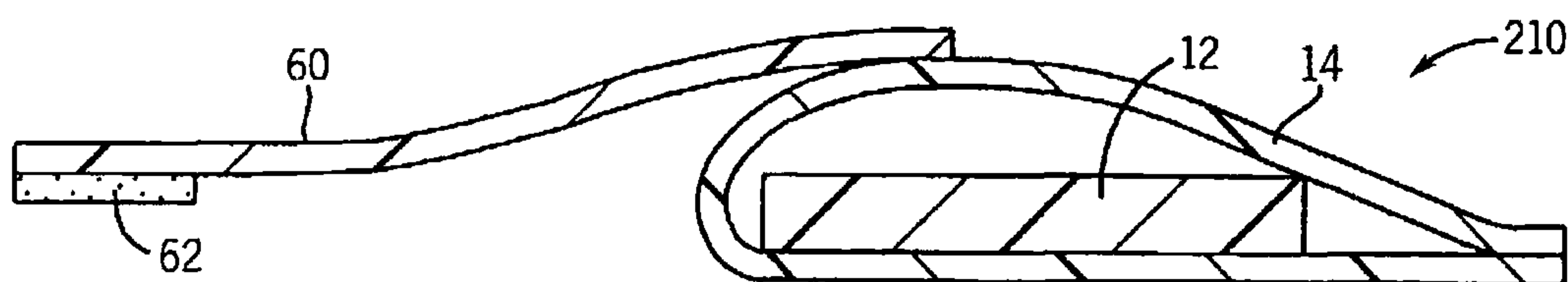


FIG. 6

1**FLUID ABSORBENT TAPE****CROSS REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

This application is a divisional application of U.S. Ser. No. 10/818,779 filed on 6 Apr. 2004, now U.S. Pat. No. 7,618,402.

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH

Not Applicable.

TECHNICAL FIELD

This invention relates to fluid absorbent tape, and in particular to an elongated fluid absorbent tape including absorbent material for controlling the flow of fluid on a surface.

DESCRIPTION OF THE BACKGROUND ART

When a floor finish is stripped from a floor, an aqueous stripping solution is often applied to the floor. Because the floors in many buildings are rarely perfectly level, the stripping solution will flow to low points in the floor. Unfortunately, the low points are not always conveniently within the area being stripped. As a result, the stripping solution will flow outside of the area being stripped, under doors, fixtures, furniture, display shelves, or off the floor onto adjacent surfaces, such as carpeting. This can cause unnecessary additional work refinishing adjacent areas, damage to fixtures, such as severe rusting, or permanent damage to the adjacent surfaces, such as discoloration of carpeting. Additionally, when the bulk of the stripping solution is removed from the floor and a new finish is applied, the stripping solution that had flowed underneath the fixtures, furniture, and display shelves, can seep back out onto the new finish, causing additional repair work or unsightly damage to the new finish.

The current practices are to do nothing to control the flow of stripping material and repair the damage as it occurs, or to use plastic sheets and masking tape to seal off edges of the surface being stripped. Sealing the edges of the surface being stripped is problematic in that it is time consuming, difficult because the worker must bend over or crawl along the floor on hands and knees, and irregularities in the floor or taping process cause leaks and gaps that the stripping solution can flow through. Although spill absorbent pads or pigs are available, they are provided in only fixed lengths and are typically too expensive to use over a large area. Accordingly, a need exists for a fluid absorbent tape that is easy to use and is customizable for different sized areas.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a fluid absorbent tape that is divided into sections. The sections can be separated to customize the length of the tape and simplify use. In one embodiment of the invention, the fluid absorbent tape includes an absorbent material enclosed in a fluid permeable cover to form an elongated fluid absorbent tape. Separating structure formed in a transverse direction through the elongated fluid absorbent tape divides the elongated tape into a first section of fluid absorbent tape and a second section of fluid absorbent tape. The first section of fluid absorbent tape is separable from the second section of fluid absorbent tape along the separating structure. In another embodiment of the invention, the fluid absorbent tape includes a fluid absorbent material including a

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super absorbent polymer. An elongated fluid permeable cover having a length encloses the fluid absorbent material, and is divided into sections along the length. Each of the sections have closed ends to inhibit the fluid absorbent material from falling out of the sections through the ends.

A general objective of the present invention is to provide a fluid absorbent tape that has a customizable length. This objective is accomplished by dividing the fluid absorbent tape into sections.

Another objective of the present invention is to provide a fluid absorbent tape that is customizable and is easy to use. This objective is accomplished in one embodiment of the invention by dividing the fluid absorbent tape into sections using separating structure which simplifies shortening the fluid absorbent tape to a desired shortened length.

Yet another objective of the present application is to provide a fluid absorbent tape that is customizable and does not create additional work. This objective is accomplished in one embodiment of the invention by dividing the fluid absorbent tape into sections and closing the ends of the sections, such that absorbent material does not fall out of the section ends.

The foregoing and other objectives and advantages of the invention will appear from the following description. In the description, reference is made to the accompanying drawings which form a part hereof, and in which there is shown by way of illustration a preferred embodiment of the invention. Such embodiment does not necessarily represent the full scope of the invention, however, and reference is made therefore to the claims herein for interpreting the scope of the invention.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a top plan view of a fluid absorbent tape incorporating the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a sectional view along line 2-2 of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a sectional view along line 3-3 of FIG. 1;

FIG. 4 is a top plan view of another embodiment of a fluid absorbent tape incorporating the present invention;

FIG. 5 is a sectional view along line 5-5 of FIG. 4; and

FIG. 6 is a sectional view of another embodiment of a fluid absorbent tape incorporating the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

A fluid absorbent tape **10**, shown in FIGS. 1-3, for use in controlling the flow of fluid on a surface includes an absorbent material **12** enclosed in a fluid permeable cover **14**. The tape **10** has an elongated length that extends between tape ends **16** and a width that extends transversely between longitudinal edges **18**, **20**. In a preferred embodiment, the length is divided into sections **22**, **24**, **26** by separating structure **28** extending transversely between the longitudinal edges **18**, **20** that allows a user to easily select a desired shortened length of the tape **10** for controlling the flow of a fluid on the surface. The shortened length of the tape **10** is selected by separating adjacent sections **24**, **26** corresponding to the desired shortened length.

The absorbent material **12** is preferably, a super absorbent polymer (SAP), such as polyacrylate absorbents, which is commercially available and can absorb many times its own weight of an aqueous fluid. The absorbent material **12** can be in any form, such a fibrous, granular, powder, gel, and the like without departing from the scope of the invention. Moreover, if the absorbent material **12** is provided in a granular or powder form, the powder or grains can be enclosed in small fluid permeable or soluble pillows or packets that can expand

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or rupture as the absorbent material **12** expands upon absorption of a fluid. Although an absorbent material for absorbing aqueous fluids, such as SAP is preferred, any suitable absorbent material can be absorb the fluid being controlled, such as clay, sponge material, petroleum absorbent material, and the like, can be used without departing from the scope of the invention.

The absorbent material **12** is enclosed within the elongated fluid permeable cover **14**, such as formed from a non-woven fabric. The cover **14** allows fluid to flow therethrough and be absorbed by the absorbent material **12**. Preferably, indicia, such as the word "Caution", icons, and the like, is printed on the cover to warn pedestrians of fluid on the surface that is being controlled by the absorbent tape **10**. Moreover, although a fluid permeable cover **14** formed from a non-woven fabric is preferred, the cover **14** can be formed from any suitable material, such as a woven fabric, a fluid impermeable material, such as plastic, having holes formed therethrough, and the like, which allows fluid to pass therethrough without degrading in a fluid environment.

Referring to FIG. 3, the cover **14** is formed from an elongated strip of a non-woven fabric having longitudinal edges **32**, **34** extending substantially parallel to a longitudinal fold line **36** (best shown in FIG. 1). The strip is folded over the absorbent material **12** about the longitudinal fold line **36**, and the longitudinal edges **32**, **34** of the strip are joined together, such as by thermal welding, sonic welding, adhesives, and the like, to define an inner volume **38** containing the absorbent material **12**. Of course, the cover **14** can be formed in other ways known in the art, such as by joining longitudinal edges of two facing strips of fluid permeable material, forming an elongated cylindrical sleeve from a fluid permeable material, and the like.

The inner volume **38** of the cover **14** is sized to allow the absorbent material **12** to expand as the absorbent material **12** becomes saturated with a fluid without causing the cover **14** to rupture. This can be accomplished by providing an inner volume **38** that is greater than the volume of the saturated absorbent material. Of course other methods that allow a volume to expand, such as by forming pleats in the cover, forming the cover from a fluid permeable expandable material, and the like can be used without departing from the scope of the invention.

Referring back to FIGS. 1-3, the elongated fluid absorbent tape **10** is divided into the joined sections **22**, **24**, **26** having an end to end relation by the separating structure **28** which allows the absorbent tape **10** to be easily shortened to a desired length. Although only three sections **22**, **24**, **26** are shown, the fluid absorbent tape **10** can have any number of sections without departing from the scope of the invention. Preferably, the separating structure **28** is a plurality of perforations that extend between the longitudinal edges **18**, **20** of the tape **10** which allow the sections **22**, **24**, **26** to be separated without tools. Most preferably, the separating structure **28** is formed in the tape **10** at regular intervals, such as every foot, to form sections in an end to end relation of a constant length along the length of the tape **10**. Although perforations are a preferred separating structure **28** because they are small and easy to form, other structure, such as slits formed intermittently through the tape between sections, cuts formed only in the longitudinal edges of the tape, holes formed between sections, and the like, can be used to define sections and allow a user to easily select a desired shortened length of the tape for controlling the flow of a fluid on a surface.

Each section **22**, **24**, **26** of the tape **10** includes ends **42**, **44** defined by the separating structure **28**. Each end **42**, **44** of each section **22**, **24**, **26** is preferably closed to inhibit the

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absorbent material **12** from falling out of the section **22**, **24**, **26** through the ends **42**, **44**. Preferably, the ends **42**, **44** are closed by sonically or thermally welding the cover **14** together adjacent to, or across, the separating structure **28**. Of course other methods known in the art for joining material together, such as adhesives, mechanical fasteners, and the like, can be used to close the ends **42**, **44** of each section **22**, **24**, **26** without departing from the scope of the invention. Moreover, if separating structure **28** is not provided, the sections **22**, **24**, **26** can be defined by the closed ends **42**, **44** of each section **22**, **24**, **26**. Of course, if separating structure **28** is not provided, tools, such as a scissors, knife, and the like, may be required to separate the sections **24**, **26** corresponding to the desired shortened length of the fluid absorbent tape **10**.

The degree of closure of the section ends **42**, **44** is dependent upon the particular absorbent material **12** being used. For example, if the absorbent material **12** is in the form of intermeshed fibers, merely tacking the cover **14** at one or more points between the tape edges **18**, **20**, such the absorbent material does not fall out may be preferred. However, if the absorbent material **12** is in powder form, sealing the ends **42**, **44** across the entire width of the tape **10** may be preferred. Each section end **42**, **44**, however, does not need to be closed across the entire width of the section **22**, **24**, **26**, such that the ends **42**, **44** are sealed and no absorbent material **12** will fall out of the closed ends **42**, **44**, to fall within the scope of the invention.

A releasable adhesive **48** can be provided along the length of the fluid absorbent tape **10** to hold the tape **10** in place on a surface and act as an initial fluid barrier. The adhesive **48** can be applied directly to the cover **14** and covered by a release liner **50** that is removed prior to use. The adhesive **48** can be applied to a portion of each section **22**, **24**, **26** to avoid having the release liner **50** extend between sections **22**, **24**, **26**. Alternatively, the release liner **50** can include separating structure aligned with the separating structure **28** formed in the fluid absorbent tape **10**. The fluid absorbent tape **10** can also be fixed to the surface using a double-sided adhesive tape adhesively bonded to the cover **14** with a release liner covering the outwardly facing side of the double sided tape without departing from the scope of the invention.

Advantageously, the fluid absorbent tape **10** can be provided in any length, such as a 10, 25, 50, 100, 200 feet, in the form of a roll or accordion folded in a box for easy storage and shipping. Only the length of fluid absorbent tape **10** required to control the fluid on the surface is removed from the box or unrolled from the roll.

In use, the fluid absorbent tape **10** is removed from the box, or unrolled from the roll, and the adjacent sections **22**, **24** of the fluid absorbent tape corresponding to the desired length of fluid absorbent tape are separated. The unused fluid absorbent tape sections **26** remain joined and in the box or on the roll for future use. Once the desired length of the fluid absorbent tape **10** has been determined and separated from the remaining fluid absorbent tape **10**, the shortened length of tape **10** is placed on the surface adjacent to the surfaces that are being protected from the fluid.

When the fluid, such as a stripping solution, comes in contact with the fluid absorbent tape **10**, the fluid passes through the cover **14** and is absorbed by the absorbent material **12**. Advantageously, absorbent material **12**, such as SAP can also swell considerably to form a physical barrier to a large flow of fluid, such as occurs while a user is spreading a stripping solution or pouring stripping solution onto a floor.

Placing the fluid absorbent tape **10** adjacent to the surface being protected and directly onto the surface containing the fluid protects the adjacent surface, and when stripping a floor

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with a stripping solution, the fluid absorbent tape **10** allows the stripping solution to contact the surface immediately under the fluid absorbent tape **10**, thus avoiding the necessity of putting stripping solution on that area of the surface and eliminating the risk of the stripping solution flowing onto the protected adjacent surface.

In one embodiment shown in FIGS. **4** and **5**, where the same reference numbers are used to designate the same components as in the first embodiment, the absorbent material **12** extends across the separating structure **28** along the longitudinal edges **18**, **20** of a fluid absorbent tape **110**. A central portion **54** of the tape **110** spaced inwardly from the longitudinal edges **18**, **20** and extending across the separating structure **28** is devoid of absorbent material **12** in order to close the ends **42**, **44** of the sections **22**, **24**, **26** by directly joining only a small portion the cover **14** together. Advantageously, this provides absorbent material **12** across the separating structure **28** to minimize the flow of fluid past the fluid absorbent tape **110** between adjacent sections **22**, **24**, **26**.

In another embodiment shown in FIG. **6**, where the same reference numbers are used to designate the same components as in the first embodiment, a fluid impermeable strip **60** of material, such as plastic, is joined to the cover **14**, such as by an adhesive, welding, and the like, along the length of a fluid absorbent tape **210**. The fluid impermeable strip **60** can be laid over a surface, such as carpeting or a wall, adjacent to the surface having fluid thereon to protect the adjacent surface from splashing or overspray. A releasable adhesive **62** can be used to adhere the fluid impermeable strip **60** to the adjacent surface to ensure the adjacent surface remains covered.

As disclosed above, the fluid absorbent tape **10**, **110**, **210** can be used to control the flow of fluid on a surface, such as a stripping solution on a floor. The fluid absorbent tape **10**, **110**, **210** however, can be used for controlling any fluids that are absorbable by the absorbent material, such as condensation, from windows, drainage from refrigeration units, cleaning solutions, large spills of any type, and the like, without departing from the scope of the invention.

While there has been shown and described what is at present considered the preferred embodiment of the invention, it will be obvious to those skilled in the art that various changes and modifications can be made therein without departing from the scope of the invention defined by the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for controlling the flow of a fluid on a surface comprising:

providing a fluid absorbent tape, said tape comprising an absorbent material; a fluid permeable cover enclosing said absorbent material to form an elongated fluid absorbent tape in which the absorbent material is disposed between upper and lower portions of the fluid permeable cover; a separating structure formed in a transverse direction across said elongated fluid absorbent tape, said separating structure dividing said elongated tape into a first section of fluid absorbent tape and a second section of fluid absorbent tape, wherein said first section of fluid absorbent tape is separable from said second section of fluid absorbent tape along said separating structure; separating a desired length of the first section of fluid absorbent tape from the second section at said separating structure;

placing said first section on the surface; and

contacting said first section with the fluid to be controlled, whereby said absorbent material forms a physical barrier to the flow of the fluid.

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2. The method of claim **1** wherein the separating structure defines an end of each of said first and second sections of said fluid absorbent tape, and at least one end of said first and second sections is closed.

3. The method of claim **2** wherein said absorbent material extends across said separating structure between said first section of said fluid absorbent tape and said second section of said fluid absorbent tape.

4. The method of claim **2** wherein said separating structure is a plurality of perforations formed in cover.

5. The method of claim **2** wherein a plurality of separating structure is formed in said fluid absorbent tape, said separating structure of said plurality of separating structure being formed across said width of said fluid absorbent tape and spaced along said length of said fluid absorbent tape to form a plurality of sections joined in an end to end relation.

6. The method of claim **5** wherein said separating structure is formed at regular intervals along said length of said tape.

7. The method of claim **2** wherein said absorbent material is a super absorbent polymer.

8. The method of claim **2** wherein said fluid permeable cover is formed from an elongated strip of fluid permeable material having longitudinal edges extending substantially parallel to a longitudinal fold line, wherein said strip is folded over said absorbent material about the longitudinal fold line, and said longitudinal edges of said strip are joined together.

9. The method of claim **2** wherein said fluid absorbent tape is fixable to a surface.

10. The method of claim **2** wherein the tape includes a fluid impermeable strip of material for protecting a surface adjacent to the tape such that the fluid does not flow onto said adjacent surface.

11. The method of claim **2** wherein the fluid absorbent tape allows the fluid to contact the surface immediately under the fluid absorbent tape.

12. A method for controlling the flow of a fluid on a surface comprising:

providing a fluid absorbent tape having a fluid permeable cover and a plurality of sections divided by closed ends and joined in an end-to-end relation by separating structure formed in a transverse direction through the fluid absorbent tape to form an elongated tape, each of said sections including an absorbent material disposed between upper and lower portions of the fluid permeable cover;

separating a desired number of sections of said tape from the remaining sections of said tape along the separating structure;

placing said desired number of sections of said tape on the surface; and

contacting said desired number of sections of said tape with the fluid to be controlled, whereby said absorbent material forms a physical barrier to the flow of the fluid.

13. The method of claim **12** wherein said separating structure is a plurality of perforations formed in cover.

14. The method of claim **12** wherein the separating structure is formed across said width of the fluid absorbent tape.

15. The method of claim **12** wherein the absorbent material is a super absorbent polymer.

16. The method of claim **12** wherein the fluid permeable cover is formed from an elongated strip of fluid permeable material having longitudinal edges extending substantially parallel to a longitudinal fold line, wherein said strip is folded over said absorbent material about the longitudinal fold line, and said longitudinal edges of said strip are joined together.

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17. The method of claim 12 wherein said fluid absorbent tape is fixable to a surface.

18. The method of claim 12 wherein the tape includes a fluid impermeable strip of material for protecting a surface adjacent to the tape such that the fluid does not flow onto said adjacent surface. 5

19. The method of claim 12 wherein the fluid absorbent tape allows the fluid to contact the surface immediately under the fluid absorbent tape.

20. A method for controlling the flow of a fluid on a surface comprising: 10

providing a fluid absorbent tape, said tape comprising an absorbent material; a fluid permeable cover enclosing said absorbent material to form an elongated fluid absorbent tape, the fluid permeable cover formed from an elongated strip of fluid permeable material having longitudinal edges extending substantially parallel to a longitudinal fold line, the elongated strip folded over said absorbent material about the longitudinal fold line and said longitudinal edges of said elongated strip joined 15

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together; a separating structure formed in a transverse direction across said elongated fluid absorbent tape, said separating structure dividing said elongated tape into a first section of fluid absorbent tape and a second section of fluid absorbent tape, wherein said first section of fluid absorbent tape is separable from said second section of fluid absorbent tape along said separating structure, the separating structure defining an end of each of the first and second sections of the fluid absorbent tape, and at least one end of the first and second sections being closed;

separating a desired length of the first section of fluid absorbent tape from the second section at said separating structure;

placing said first section on the surface; and contacting said first section with the fluid to be controlled, whereby said absorbent material forms a physical barrier to the flow of the fluid.

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